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Economic and Social
Council

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18 April 1997

ORIGINAL : ENGLISH

ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Fifty-second session
(Agenda item 5(a))

SUBJECT: Endorsement of ECE Recommendation 25, "Use of the UN/EDIFACT Standard (ECE/TRADE/207) for Endorsement by ECOSOC as an International UN Recommendation

ACTION TO BE TAKEN: Decision

PROPOSED BY: The Committee for the Development of Trade

The Commission decides to:

1. Endorse the September 1996 decision of the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, now known as the Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices in Administration, Commerce and Transport (CEFACT), as found in TRADE/WP.4/197, paragraph 48, as well as the December 1996 decision of the Committee on the Development of Trade (ECE/TRADE/210, para. 23), endorsing ECE Recommendation 25, "Use of the UN/EDIFACT Standard" (ECE/TRADE/207) and recommending that ECOSOC adopt it as an international UN Recommendation;

2. Recommend that the Economic and Social Council endorse ECE/TRADE/207 as an international UN Recommendation.

GE.97-21163

Background Note to Commission Decision on
ECE Recommendation 25

UN Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce and Transport (UN/EDIFACT) is the only international standard for Electonic Data Interchange and is supported by a Memorandum of Understanding with the ISO. The development and maintenance of the Standard is done by around 1,500 technical experts whose input is managed by Regional UN/EDIFACT Boards (Asia, Australia/New Zealand, Central and Eastern Europe, Pan America and Western Europe with plans to revive the African Board). In addition ECE/EDIFACT has been endorsed for use by a number of important international organizations such as the World Customs Organization (WCO), the International Air Transport Association (IATA), the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (S.W.I.F.T.) and the International Article Numbering Association (EAN). It is estimated that over 100,000 private and public organizations have implemented the Standard.

However, in some countries outside the region governments have hesitated to adopt for their own use a purely ECE Recommendation. Therefore, the Working Party on Facilitation of International Trade Procedures, now known as the Centre for Facilitation of Procedures and Practices in Administration, Commerce and Transport (CEFACT), had been asked to request the endorsement of Recommendation 25 on the use of UN/EDIFACT by delegations and technical experts coming from outside the ECE region as well as by a number of international organizations. They believe that such an ECOSOC Recommendation would be a valuable tool for promoting the implementation of UN/EDIFACT by their governments, thus bringing governmental practices more in line with those of the private sector.

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ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Fifty-second session
(Agenda item 5(a))

SUBJECT: United Nations International Framework Classification for Reserves/ Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities

ACTION TO BE TAKEN: Decision

PROPOSED BY:
The Committee on Energy

The Commission decides to:

1. Endorse the decision of the Working Party on Coal (ENERGY/WP.1/12, para. 33) and that of the Committee on Energy (ECE/ENERGY/30, para. 43) taken at their sixth session held in 1996 to approve the new "United Nations Framework Classification for Reserves/ Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities".

2. Request the ECE secretariat to publish, by November 1997, the UN-Framework Classification to facilitate the use of the classification framework by major coal and mineral industries worldwide.

3. Recommend to the Committee on Sustainable Energy to monitor the application of the UN-Framework Classification commencing 1997.

4. Recommend to the Economic and Social Council to consider appropriate measures for the world-wide application of the UN-Framework Classification for Reserves/ Resources.

GE.97-21166

Background Note to Commission Decision on United Nations International Framework Classification for Reserves/ Resources: Solid Fuels and Mineral Commodities

An international framework classification for reserves /resources of solid fuels and mineral commodities was recently completed under the auspices of the Working Party on Coal. Work on the Classification started in earnest in 1994. The main purpose for developing the classification framework was to create an instrument which would permit reserves/resources to be classified on an internationally consistent and uniform basis using market economy criteria.

The classification framework will enable the incorporation of national and regional classification systems into a consistent, unified framework in order to make them compatible and comparable; help to enhance communication on a national and international level; provide for a better understanding and firmer knowledge of available reserves/resources; assist economies in transition in reassessing their solid fuels and mineral deposits according to market economy criteria; and facilitate investments, notably in transition and developing countries.

The classification framework has been endorsed by the Working Party on Coal and the Committee on Energy. In addition, the elaboration of the classification was supported by major coal and minerals producing non-ECE countries, among which were Argentina, Australia, Brazil, China, Columbia, Ethiopia, India, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Philippines, South Africa and Thailand (these countries participated in the elaboration of the Classification pursuant to Article 11 of the Commission's Terms of Reference). More than sixty ECE and non-ECE countries participated in the elaboration of the Classification.

The Classification is available in the three ECE working languages. Furthermore, arrangements are underway to have it translated into four additional languages, namely Chinese, German, Portuguese and Spanish. These translations are being undertaken by participating institutions of the countries that took part in the elaboration of the Classification.

In brief, ECE countries are being asked to endorse the Classification; request that it be published; invite the Committee on Sustainable Energy to monitor its implementation; and recommend that ECOSOC consider appropriate measures for its worldwide application. A similar resolution was adopted regarding the codification of medium and high rank coals by both the Commission and ECOSOC in 1988.

This Classification Framework is a good example of the normative functions of the Commission (i.e., the development of norms, standards, and guidelines) to promote the integration of the economies of ECE countries. In addition, it illustrates how a norm or standard developed under the auspices of the ECE can then be subsequently promulgated and adopted more globally.